

VTS overview (based on [Visual Thinking Strategies](#) by Philip Yenawine, 2014)

WHY USE VTS? Outcomes/purpose – students learn how to:

- Develop the habit of providing evidence to back up inferences, interpretations and opinions.
- Make sense of what is unfamiliar
- Speculate (consider multiple possibilities)
- Make more complex observations with more detail
- Revise former thoughts
- Provide alternate perspectives and feel that their points are just as valid as others’.

VTS- At-A-Glance

Begin with Silent looking Give students a moment in silence before you invite them to speak.

Questions – use this language exactly

1. What's going on in this picture?

The phrasing of this question encourages the finding of stories and narratives while also allowing comments of any sort. Open with this question but do not continue to use it.

2. What do you *see* that makes you *say* that?

This question asks students to ground their observations in *evidence*. Use it even when you agree with the opinion or think you know to what the student refers.

3. What *more* can we find?

This is a very direct way of creating a habit of pushing beyond early impressions. You continuously remind all students that no matter how much they've found and thought about, there's more.

Respond to student in the following ways:

Accept Answers Neutrally

- Listen carefully to students, making sure that you hear all of what they say and that you understand it accurately.
 - Encouraging tone of voice (accept ALL answers, not just some)
 - Encouraging body language and facial expressions
 - “Yes, AND what more can we find?” (stay away from “but”)
 - No “teaching” or giving information – otherwise students will wait to hear the “right answer”
 - No inserting your own views or interpretations

Paraphrase and point

- Paraphrase what student said in different words, using CONDITIONAL language
 - “You are seeing.... and you are wondering if it's...”
 - By paraphrasing, you
 - Validate students - you hear and understand them.
 - Provide vocabulary to help students express what they want to say.
 - Introduce new or art vocabulary to assist students with language development (elements and principles of art)

Link and Frame Thoughts

- Encourage nuanced thinking (multiple solutions to problems = common core)
 - link answers to other students’ statements
 - connect ideas that agree and don’t agree
 - Acknowledge agreements and disagreements: "It seems that several people see that," or, "We have a variety of opinions here."
 - Disagreement becomes interesting and valuable, not threatening
 - DO NOT draw conclusions

Concluding

- Point out positive behaviors: “I was impressed by how much you listened to each other during the discussion of such and such.” OR “I learned so many... (details, possibilities...) by listening to what you noticed” OR “What did you learn from this discussion?” DO NOT summarize any thoughts at the end.